

BEFORE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

JENNIFER S. COHEN  
Friends of Jan Schneider  
P.O. 57  
Sarasota, Florida 34230

MUR # 5792

2006 AUG - 9 A 11: 29

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

v.

CHRISTINE JENNINGS  
Christine Jennings for Congress  
PO Box 49135  
Sarasota, FL 34230

COMPLAINT

1. Respondent Christine Jennings is a candidate running in the Democratic primary for Congress in the Florida 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.
2. Jennifer S. Cohen is the Campaign Manager for Jan Schneider, who is also running in the same Democratic primary for Congress in the Florida 13<sup>th</sup>.
3. As recently reported in several local newspapers and acknowledged by the candidate herself, a prominent contributor paid \$25,000 for Christine Jennings to have a meeting of approximately five-minutes duration with former President Bill Clinton. In addition, upon information and belief, the same contributor may have made at least one and perhaps more additional large contributions in order to gain access for Ms. Jennings to promote her campaign.
4. Two days before the Clinton event, Ms. Jennings announced at a meeting of the Democratic Club of Sarasota County that she was going to have a meeting with the former President, along with nine other people. The announcement was made in the course of a debate between the two Democratic primary candidates, which event was attended by perhaps 200 or more people. Ms. Jennings proudly advertised the upcoming Clinton meeting, which was to take place at an event sponsored by the Democratic Party of Florida, as beneficial to her as a candidate and to her campaign. She declined to mention the \$25,000 payment.

27044153081

27044153082

5. The morning after the Clinton meeting, Ms. Jennings called the political reporters of the major local newspapers to advertise the Clinton meeting as beneficial to her and her campaign. We know this because the same reporters thereafter called the Schneider campaign for comment. The reporters said that they were unaware of any payment, let alone \$25,000, for Ms. Jennings to participate in the Clinton meeting. Attached hereto please find an article and a letter that appeared in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune on this subject.

6. Subsequently, Ms. Jennings has mentioned the Clinton meeting at several Democratic events. Several hundred people have heard such remarks, and some of the forums or other events have been taped.

7. There is no report of the \$25,000 in the subsequent Jennings campaign finance report to the Federal Election Commission. Upon information and belief, the donor in question was already "maxed out" in official contributions to the Jennings campaign and may in addition have paid for at least one event similar to the Clinton meeting.

8. We believe the \$25,000 payment to have been a political contribution. The purpose of attending the Clinton event appears to have political and directly campaign-related. Ms. Jennings has refused to identify the donor. According to our information, however, the contributor was not in any way previously related to or associated with the candidate – other than, obviously, through his support of her Congressional campaign. Again upon information and belief, the two had no business or personal relationship prior to the candidate running for Congress or outside the context of the Congressional campaign.

9. Alternatively, however, were the \$25,000 payment "personal," as Ms. Jennings has reportedly claimed, it would still appear to violate campaign finance laws and regulations. A third party may not defray personal expenses for a candidate unless the payment would have been made irrespective of the candidacy.

10. One of the Schneider "major donors" who is "maxed out" in campaign contributions has indicated willingness to provide tickets for our candidate to attend similar events in the area and to meet with prominent Democrats around the country. If it is legal for our competitor to benefit from such a practice to the extent of at least \$25,000 (and, we believe, more), one would assume it would be legal -- although perhaps ethically questionable and politically unwise -- for us to do the same. In any event, before making any decisions, we would like FEC guidance on the question of compliance with federal campaign finance rules and regulations.

11. In sum, our campaign believes that our competitor, Christine Jennings, has benefited from an illegal campaign contribution in the amount of \$25,000 and perhaps other similar contributions in violation of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (the "Act") and applicable regulations. If this is not the case, may we assume that it would be legal for us to accept assistance in similar amounts under similar circumstances?

12. As we understand the law, the term "contribution" is defined in the Act and Commission regulations to include "any gift, subscription, loan, advance, or deposit of money or anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office." 2 U.S.C. §431(8)(A)(i); 11 CFR 100.52(a). Under FEC implementing regulations, prohibiting the "personal use" of campaign funds, payment by a third party of a candidate expense that would otherwise be deemed a "personal use" is considered a "contribution" by the third party unless the payment would have been made "irrespective of the candidacy." 11 CFR §113.1(g)(6).

13. This is a matter of considerable urgency. Early voting for the Democratic primary here begins on August 21, and the primary itself is on September 5.

14. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

  
Jennifer S. Cohen

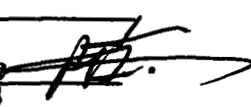
STATE OF FLORIDA, COUNTY OF SARASOTA:

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 4th day of August, 2006, by Jennifer S. Cohen.

Personally Known \_\_\_\_\_ OR Produced Identification \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Identification Produced \_\_\_\_\_

NOTARY SIGNATURE



  
Alberto S. Belinfante  
Commission #DDT77024  
Expires: Feb 25, 2007  
Bonded Through  
Atlantic Bonding Co., Inc.

Note: For further information, please see:

Jeremy Wallace, "Congressional candidate gets time with Clinton," Sarasota Herald-Tribune,  
June 19, 2006,

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060619/COLUMNIST89/60619045>  
5

"[Candidate] milked Clinton visit," Sarasota Herald-Tribune, June 28, 2006 (letter from Rachel  
Kestenbaum),

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060628/OPINION/606280339>